

year, and I am cosponsoring it again this year. But the weakness of a statute is that it can be changed by a simple majority vote. And the only real long-term protection is by a constitutional amendment.

During my 22 years in the Ohio Senate, including several terms as Senate President, I witnessed a tremendous increase in the cost and the number of mandates being forced on the States. When the States originally ceded power to the Federal Government, they could not have envisioned a situation where State law would be so lightly overturned and where State funds would be subject to Federal raids.

Unfunded mandates permit the Federal Government to avoid responsibility for its actions. They give the Federal Government the power to reorder and to distort State and local budget priorities. States have had to curtail services they feel are priorities because of those mandates. States have had to cut schools. They have had to cut police protection, programs for senior citizens. They have had to cut police protection.

And examples of unfunded mandates are both large and small. For example, the mayor of Columbus, OH, our capital city, has estimated the cost of unfunded mandates for his city as \$800 per year for every single individual in the city. In 1993, shortly after I introduced the original amendment, I heard from the fire chief of Van Wert, OH, a small city in my district, complaining about Federal regulations that required him to replace the breathing tanks his men use when they enter smoke-filled areas. Not a single one of the tanks were defective or needed to be replaced, but it cost him \$9,500 to replace them.

At the same time he was forced to cut his budget for volunteer firemen. For that \$9,500, the chief could have had 20 volunteer firemen instead of having his force cut down to 5.

There is an EPA requirement that sets atrazine limits at three parts per billion in drinking water. That sounds good until you consider that it would cost one city \$80 million to comply and will not increase public health or safety at all.

How much water does a person have to drink, based on that standard, to have even a remote chance of having any adverse effect on their health? An individual would have to drink 38 bathtubs full of water every day for the rest of his or her life; and for the same amount of money, that city could have hired 3,700 schoolteachers. What has happened is that Congress has been irresponsibly freeloading on the backs of State and local government.

Congress passes a requirement. It takes the credit. But it refuses to pay the burden for the mandates that are created. State and local governments pay the cost. They get the political blame.

Contrary to what some opponents say, this does not prevent Congress from passing anything on health and

safety. It just says, pay for your actions like anybody else. There are some in the Federal Government who have been freeloading and have been irresponsible for so long that they think that freeloading and irresponsibility are virtues.

Now is the time to restore a proper balance in Federal relations. This amendment does not in any way endanger public health or safety. It enhances it by helping assure that public resources are effectively spent and not wasted.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. MINETA] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MINETA. Mr. Speaker, this morning, as billions of people around the world know, the cities of Kobe and Osaka in southern Japan were struck with a devastating 7.2 magnitude earthquake.

As of noon today, Washington time, nearly 1,600 people were known dead, more than 1,000 were missing, and more than 6,000 were injured.

No words are necessary beyond reading that toll to know that the family lives disrupted by this epic tragedy will never heal completely.

And no words are necessary beyond reading this next tally to know that the tremendous physical damage will not soon be repaired:

More than 4,000 buildings were destroyed this morning. Expressway and rail service has either been severed or disrupted in much of western Japan. Power and telecommunications systems have been cut.

These people are now in crisis, and I know that Americans everywhere share in the sadness caused by this tragedy.

We do so because of the suffering involved. And we do so out of a feeling of a *deja vu* that hits still closer to home.

The sad irony of this earthquake in Japan is that this day also marks the 1-year anniversary of the Northridge Earthquake—a 6.7-magnitude quake which killed 61 people and caused 20 billion dollars' worth of damage in the Los Angeles area.

The lesson we should be learning is that the forces of nature continue to strike at will.

The lesson we should be learning is that in our increasingly developed world, the costs of responding to natural disasters and repairing the damage keeps going up—and that we do not have a bottomless checkbook.

Unless and until we act as a nation to mitigate the potential for damage,

Unless we make it possible to recover from natural disasters with lives and communities more intact than is possible under present law,

We will pay a higher and higher cost in lives lost, in the cost to rebuild, and in the dislocation to our economy and society while we rebuild.

As chair of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee in the last Congress, I can tell you that the 1994 Northridge Earthquake and the 1993 Midwest flooding became cases in point—as did hurricanes Andrew and Iniki, and the Loma Prieta Earthquake in earlier years.

Today, California also suffers from statewide flooding in addition to the Northridge memories of a year ago.

Since last Wednesday, I have spent several days examining the destruction caused by the

floods in my State. I have looked at which systems worked, which did not, and how Government agencies and nonprofit voluntary agencies worked to save lives and help communities recover.

These floods reminded me again that we as a nation are not helpless, but that clearly we are not doing all that we can in advance to stave off the human and financial costs of natural disasters.

In the last Congress, the Public Works and Transportation Committee approved legislation—the first of its kind—to get ahead of this particular curve.

This legislation—the Natural Disaster Protection Partnership Act—would create the first public-private partnership to reduce the cost of natural disasters and to keep disaster insurance available and affordable to homeowners so that less of the cleanup and repair cost would be at taxpayer expense.

We would accomplish these two goals in four ways. First, through better preparedness. Second, through spreading out the financial risks, which would lower the costs to homeowners and ensure that coverage would be available.

Third, through better State and local government enforcement of building standards. And fourth, through Federal coordination and required financial backstops to existing insurance pools.

Just about every group affected—from homeowners associations, to consumer advocates, to insurance companies, to emergency service officials—has agreed that the Natural Disaster Protection Partnership Act has the right combination of ideas to end the fear and create greater security, and to do so by putting greater reliance on the private sector.

This is why I was delighted when a bipartisan House task force endorsed the provisions of my bill last month.

If there is any single piece of legislation that cries out for enactment early in this new Congress, it is this one.

Today's earthquake in Japan was another reminder, and warning.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Illinois [Mrs. COLLINS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. COLLINS of Illinois, addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Arkansas [Mrs. LINCOLN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. LINCOLN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

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RECOMMENDING A FAVORABLE REPORT ON HOUSE RESOLUTION 15

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WELDON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Missouri [Ms. MCCARTHY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, while I voted for the final version of the Congressional Accountability Act that was just before us, I want to register my extreme disappointment that it did not include a provision barring House Members from using frequent flyer awards for personal trips. Under this measure, Senators are prohibited from doing so.

For this reason, I joined today as a cosponsor of House Resolution 15, introduced by my colleague, the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. BARRETT], which would require that travel awards that accrue due to official travel by Members of the House be used only for official travel. This resolution has been referred to the new Committee on House Oversight. The Speaker has been quoted in this afternoon's Congress Daily as saying he recommends that the Committee on House Oversight review this matter.

I hope the Committee on House Oversight will do more than just review this matter. The legislation of the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. BARRETT] is very important. I hope they will favorably report it to the full House, so we can hold ourselves to the same high standard of ethics as the other governing boards, the other House, and all of the U.S. Government.

Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly that if we do not do this, we demonstrate an hypocrisy that is not appropriate to the governing of this House.

THE ROLE OF UNITED STATES IN SOLVING MEXICO'S MONETARY CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] for 60 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, while America was celebrating Martin Luther King Day yesterday and the long weekend, officials over at the White House and here in the Nation's Capitol buildings were running around frantically trying to figure out how to bail out Mexico with your taxpayer dollars, without calling it a bailout. They say "It won't cost us a penny because Mexico will pay it all back."

However, Mexico has never paid back its debts. That is why it is in the fix it is today. The powers that be here in Washington, therefore, have devised a multibillion dollar taxpayer bailout plan to prop up Mexico after the recent peso meltdown.

Listen to this. It will conveniently be placed off budget, through some fancy manipulations of lawyer's words that will make it sound like our taxpayer's don't end up holding the bag. First, there was an \$18 billion loan package with a \$9 billion line of credit from the U.S. Treasury and our Federal Reserve.

You know what the Federal Reserve is. When you put money in your local bank, it then goes up in the chain and the local banks end up owning the dis-

trict banks which then own the Federal Reserve, so it is your money to begin with.

But that was not enough of our taxpayer's money last week, so now we are being asked to put up an additional, are you ready, \$40 billion, that is with a B, dollars in loan guarantees in Mexico. But of course we are being told it is just a safety net and we will probably never really have to pay it, because surely Mexico will not have any problems paying off these new loans.

This is really getting interesting. How ironic that during the very month when Congress is about to consider a balanced budget amendment to put our taxpayers in a vice, we are being asked to close our eyes to this unprecedented back door version of foreign aid that holds the potential to bust any budget that we pass here. Off budget? Off budget means the bill will be on your budget, that taxpayers' budget. Don't you just love it?

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. KAPTUR. I yield to my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from Hawaii.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Would the gentlewoman characterize the reaction perhaps in her district as I find in my district, that people are under the impression that we may be giving this money to the Mexican Government? And would it be a fair characterization to say we may in fact be doing exactly that, because if they default, won't we in fact be giving it to them by taking it from our own people?

Ms. KAPTUR. We absolutely will. In effect, our people become Mexico's insurance company.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Would the gentlewoman kindly explain what that means, if we become their insurance company? What obligation does the taxpayer in America have if there is a default by the Mexican oligarchy?

Ms. KAPTUR. If there is a default—and as I say, Mexico has never paid back its debts. It owes \$89 billion it is not paying off right now. It means that we pledge the full faith and credit of the people of the United States to pay the debts of Mexico.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Is it a correct assumption that if they have not paid any of the debt that you have mentioned so far and are unable to pay anything on that which we are going to advance them, that they will be combined and the taxpayers in America will have to take up all of that obligation?

Ms. KAPTUR. That is the way it looks to me, my friend.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I thank the gentlewoman.

Ms. KAPTUR. I thank the gentleman. Now the new "leadership," I put leadership in quotes, of this institution is turning cartwheels over one another trying to push this through real fast, real fast. I just love it.

Where is the new Committee on the Budget? Where are the new Members

who said that they were going to finally balance the budget of our country? What a joke. Instead of a Contract With America, this Congress is falling over itself to pass a new contract with Mexico. Who is kidding who?

Members like myself understand the power of Wall Street, and megabanks, and multinational corporations. We understand the power of the media to keep this crisis under wraps at their bidding and hope the taxpayers miss this one.

Last week in Washington over a dozen Members of Congress held a major press conference here in the Press Gallery. There had to be over 100 press people. The rooms were overflowing. I asked my friends around the country, "How much did you read about that in your newspapers?" Who was it that made the telephone calls from the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, that suppressed the press releases and the messages that we tried to get out to the people of the United States? I have a hunch who it was.

We understand the power of the White House. We understand the power of the leadership here in this Congress. We do not like it, but we understand it. We know they want to slip this baby through with as little public scrutiny as possible. There is a lot of money at stake for their friends.

After all, it would be embarrassing to them, all those high-flying speculators that gambled with mutual funds in this country, the ones who are always complaining about how they want Uncle Sam off their back, until they need to put their hands into our taxpayers' pockets to get them out of another one of their expensive binds.

To them I say, look out, because once the American people figure out the magnitude of what you are trying to do, they are going to be outraged.

Mr. Speaker, I ask, please do not tell us this will be good to the people of Mexico. That autocratic state will not be one whit more democratic when this is all over. Its citizenry will not have any greater standing in that legal system, nor will our businesses, who do business down there.

All that will happen is that the vise around the necks of Mexico's people will continue to grow tighter. Mexican wages will decrease even more. Life that is already tough for the majority of Mexico's citizens will become even more unbearable. Inflation will be even tougher to manage than it is now.

But get this, Mexico's super-rich families took their money out of that country before the peso meltdown. How convenient.

□ 1740

Why are they not being held accountable? Why should United States taxpayers put their money on the line when Mexico's 3 dozen ruling families have their billions safely tucked away offshore?

If we remember back to 1984 and Mexico owed commercial banks in those